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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 2005

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BRIEFING

Erdogan - Annan Meeting: Prime Minister Erdogan yesterday met with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and urged him to gain approval of his Cyprus report by the UN Security Council. Erdogan also urged more pressure on the Greek Cypriots to restart negotiations for the island's reunification. "Radikal" reports that following the meeting Annan said that the Cyprus peace process could not be resumed in the short term. PM Erdogan announced a new, five-point strategy for Cyprus: the free movement of people and goods through the island; lifting of restrictions on the use of all ports and airport, including for direct flights; allowing northern Cyprus to benefit from the EU Customs Union; allowing the 'TRNC' to participate in international sports and cultural events; and bringing the Annan plan to a new vote after some changes are made.

Erdogan's Visit to the US: Today's papers carry conflicting reports about PM Erdogan's visit to Washington. "Hurriyet" says the meeting between Bush and Erdogan was not sufficient to end the problems in bilateral relations. US officials are upset specifically about Turkey's Syria policy. "Cumhuriyet" reports that US mistrust in the AKP foreign policy has increased as a result of the meeting. Papers cite comments by members of the opposition CHP characterizing the visit as 'a fiasco.' "Vatan" draws attention to the problems Erdogan ran into in the White House when he tried to defend his policies toward Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad. The paper claims that President Bush stated openly that the US and the international community are not happy with Turkey's policies on Syria. "Aksam" notes that no progress was made on any issue during the visit. "Cumhuriyet" writes that Washington is preoccupied with its own interests in Iraq, and is therefore turning a blind eye to Turkish requests for combating the PKK. The paper adds that the US is not likely to carry out an operation against the PKK in the Kandil Mountains until the insurgency in Iraq ends and work is completed on the establishment of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq. "Radikal" and "Milliyet" cite US sources as saying US side will closely follow the Turkish Government's statements and actions in the weeks and months ahead. Only then, according to these sources, will it be known whether the Erdogan visit was a real success. Papers also note that the Vice President Cheney reacted positively to Erdogan's invitation to visit Turkey later this year.

Turkish Trucker Killed in Iraq: "Sabah" reports that a Turkish truck driver heading to a US base after entering Iraq from Kuwait was attacked and killed in an area near Ramadi.

Istanbul Conference on Democracy and Global Security: Speaking at the International Democracy and Global Security Conference hosted by the Turkish National Police, Prime Minister Erdogan, speaking via satellite from Washington, said that terrorism has become the main threat to democracy and global security in the new millennium. Erdogan added that Turkey is willing to share its 25-year experience in fighting terrorism with other countries in the world.

EDITORIAL OPINION: US-Turkey/PM Erdogan in the U.S./BMENAI

"OK, So Now What Happens?" Ergun Babahan, editor-in-chief of the mainstream daily "Sabah" (6/10): "PM Erdogan's meeting with President Bush, around which there had been so much speculation, is finally over. The Prime Minister tried to win points in Washington by his statements prior to the visit. For example, he announced that Turkey will support the Greater Middle East Initiative (GME), which he had strongly opposed until a few days ago. He said Turkey and the United States have the same view of Iraq. He stressed the existence of a strategic partnership. But despite the generally positive atmosphere in the meeting, it has emerged that the Bush administration is keeping its distance from the Turkish Government. One of the main areas of disagreement is Syria. The US Administration wants to isolate the Baath regime in Damascus. The Erdogan Government wants to lead the Syrians to the right path using its own methods. There is a serious difference of views on this issue. Similarly, Erdogan wants the United States to take action against the PKK in northern Iraq. But Washington doesn't seem too eager. The Americans say they don't have enough troops, that they need more time, that they don't want to come into conflict with the Kurdish administration. But real 'strategic partners' don't have major disagreements on two key issues. It is not clear to me how two administrations that disagree on fundamental issues can have a real partnership. There is a deep crisis of confidence between Washington and Ankara. I'm not saying that Washington is right. But I will say that there have been commitments made to Washington that have not been kept, and the differences between words and deeds have created serious question marks about Turkey in Washington. The political leadership in Ankara will be in a weaker position to govern if it is in a poor relationship with the United States. PM Erdogan has seen this personally since he has been in power. That's why this trip was important. He knows that it has been the AKP, not the CHP, that is most responsible for damaging the relationship. It is for that reason that while he has been in Washington, he has been saying nothing but positive things about the US. The US administration is giving Turkey's legitimate leaders a new chance to continue the relationship. The future of the relationship between the two countries, or more precisely between the Bush Administration and the AKP leadership, will be determined by whether the Turkish Government stands behind the commitments it made at the White House."

"The Triumph of Conspiracy Logic" Fehmi Kuru wrote in the Islamist-oriented "Yeni Safak" (6/10): We all witnessed that PM Tayyip Erdogan was received with great esteem at the White House. The Bush-Erdogan meeting clearly represents a new opening for Turkey and the United States. But rumors coming from behind the scenes are aiming to undermine this positive situation. Is there anti-Americanism in Turkey? The polls show that the anti-American atmosphere in Turkey is strong. But is there a country anywhere that hasn't shown a reaction to the wrong-headed analyses that emerged in Washington after September 11. In many countries in Europe, opposition to President Bush's policies is much stronger than it is in Turkey. In some countries, this anger may even be extended to the American people. In Turkey, on the other hand, there is a clear distinction being made between the US administration and the American people. In this situation, can the political leadership really be accused of fomenting anti-Americanism? Can the AKP Government, or any government for that matter, fairly be charged with stoking anti-American views that had already appeared on the scene? Yet as soon as we set foot in the US capital, that is the main issue that we heard being discussed. According to the rumors that were being fed by certain people, anti-Americanism in Turkey was created and controlled by the AKP. Underlying this was the fact that after PM Erdogan took it into his head to seek an appointment in Washington, the anti-American atmosphere seemed to go into relative decline. Why? Because the AKP Party, which had fed that sentiment in the first place, was now bringing it under control. Since September 11, the Americans have been complaining in increasingly loud tones about the prevalence of conspiracy theory. But the contention that the AKP has fed and is controlling anti-

Americanism in Turkey is the lamest conspiracy theory I have heard yet. For a government to be capable of this, it would either have to hold all the mechanisms in its hands for manipulating the media - like the Bush Administration - or else have the dictatorial powers of a tyrant like Hitler. You would have to be blind not to see that Turkey is a democratic country, and that its media is not creating positive feelings about the AKP Government. Washington needs to see that Tayyip Erdogan took upon himself a risk by visiting the US capital. It's not hard to guess what is behind the efforts to spread this kind of nonsense about the AKP - to force those who took the trouble to go to Washington with all good intentions to accept a kind of cooperation that they had avoided in the past. Should the United States, which has set the region ablaze through the war in Iraq, be allowed to spread that fire to neighboring countries by drawing Turkey to its side? I don't think that even reasonable Americans could want that. First, the Americans need to look at themselves.

"Strategic What?"

Sami Kohen observed in the mass appeal "Milliyet" (6/10): "Some of the policies pursued by Ankara are not compatible with views in Washington. Syria is at the top of the list. The White House meeting and its reflection in the press is indicative of the differences the two sides have on the Syria issue. This means that if the two countries are engaged in a partnership or relationship in the strategic sense, Syria is out of the line of bilateral cooperation. This difference may not constitute an obstacle to a broader relationship for the time being. But it remains to be seen what Ankara may do when the US steps up its pressure on Syria and looks for Turkish support. . The strategic partnership calls for full cooperation. Turkey may not have the luxury of making its own choices."

"The Revival of Strategic Alliance?"

Yilmaz Oztuna opined in the conservative "Turkiye" (6/10): "The revival of a strategic alliance between Turkey and the US heavily depends on Turkey's performance. In fact, Turkey's future is to be shaped by its ability to overcome certain complexes and superstitions. Unfortunately, certain so-called advisers are pointing the government in the wrong direction. One of them is the fantasy that Muslims cannot engage in a fight with other Muslims. The history of humanity is full of wars and brutalities between Muslims -- the 8-year-long Iran-Iraq war is only one example of many. The second misguided idea is the argument that Turkey will end up living in this geography with its neighbors - like Syria and Iraq - and not the US. This is an argument that is impossible to defend. In this geography, the US will be our neighbor for at least for another 50 years. If we are a serious state, we should not forget or overlook that some of the regimes around us are anti-Turkish."

"Bush and Erdogan Agree To Work Against Turkey"

Mustafa Balbay wrote in the leftist-nationalist "Cumhuriyet" (6/10): "Some in the Turkish press have deliberately portrayed the Bush-Erdogan meeting as a positive, writing headlines about 'a fresh beginning' or 'a new page' in bilateral relations. These headlines hide the fact that the US has started making plans for the period ahead which should be of direct concern for us. These steps are to be taken as part of the BMENAI project. We simply do not know what promises Erdogan made to Bush. Similarly, we don't know to what extent Bush talked openly about the goals of the BMENAI. Therefore it is not possible to make an assessment about how much Turkey will be affected by the efforts to implement the BMENAI. But one thing is very clear. PM Erdogan is desperate to have strong US support for his government. He is ready to do anything to continue in office. So the two leaders have agreed on something specific - the effort to undermine the fundamental principles of Ataturk's republic."

"New Strategic Relations with the US"

Erhan Basyurt wrote in the Islamist-oriented "Zaman" (6/10): "Turkey has been providing support for the US for some time, including permission for the use of Incirlik airbase and a leading role in the civilian and military effort in Afghanistan. Turkey also supports the BMENAI project. President Bush thanked Turkey for its support and mentioned Turkish democracy as a model. Turkey is also one of the co-chairs of the 'Democracy Assistance Dialogue,' a grouping that is a part of the BMENA initiative. . It seems the strategic partnership between the two countries that was established during the First Gulf War and then deteriorated during the Second Gulf War is now being billed as a strategic relationship. Erdogan's visit to Washington was certainly important as part of the attempt to smooth the bilateral relationship. But what kind of relationship the two countries really have will only be seen in the steps taken by both countries in the days ahead."

"If We Use The Greater Middle East Project Well."

Aydin Ayaydin in the mainstream daily "Sabah" (6/10):

"Prime Minister Erdogan met with President Bush on the second day of his visit to the United States. The Oval Office meeting, which lasted about an hour, was an opportunity to breathe new life into the relationship, which had been broken since March 1, 2003. On the Greater Middle East Initiative (GME), which is given great importance by the US side, Turkey displayed a joint approach, but commentators have noted that the Syria issue showed that Erdogan and Bush really aren't on the same frequency. President Bush is determined on the GME. If Erdogan really wants to take a step toward fixing the relationship, he needs to make his views clear on this issue. It is clear that there is no use debating the GME with the United States. The US view is quite clear. But what will Turkey's position be? The United States wants to know this. The GME was renamed the Greater Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENAI) at last year's G-8 Summit. That meeting also laid out the first details of the initiative. There are 90 million young people between the ages of 15-24 in the countries of the Broader Middle East. 14 million of them (16 percent) are unemployed. The numbers of unemployed are increasing by 3.5 percent each year. The growth rate in most of these countries is right around zero. There is no economic integration in the region. According to the BMENAI, there is no organized effort to curb the spread of weapons in the region. As a result, there is a race for arms, including for WMD. In short, this area is a source of great instability. 14 million youth can't find a way to make a dollar. They are hungry. These youth are a source of international terrorism. The BMENAI is an effort to improve the economic, social, and cultural infrastructure in this region. It also seeks to move these countries toward democratization. But it also leaves each country free to determine the form of its own political development. When looked at in this way, the BMENAI is an ethical initiative in the social and economic sense. If Turkey evaluates this initiative in the right way and uses its geography and geopolitical understanding effectively, it could take a leadership role in this region and beyond."

MOORE